

ALONG THE TRAIL

Some Travel Directions and Information

This information will not try to locate each and every station site for a number of reasons. Some are isolated from main roads and possibly on private property. Some are not definitely pin-pointed and most are only a spot on the ground. To locate some would be more time consuming and less rewarding than the average person might feel worth while. So, some points of interest are left out.

This writing will try to point out a few of the main points of interest to the person willing to spend somewhat more than average time in seeking out history spots between St. Joseph and Sacramento. You can accelerate your trip by skipping portions of these sites or prolong it by making local inquiries and investigating.

Many stations along the route are not mentioned because they are not marked or if so in an obscure way. Others are inaccessible. It would be advisable to take a Pony Express map along to compare with stations mentioned in this writing. Pony Express trail maps are available at the Pony Express Stables Museum. By following the sequence of stations on the Pony Express trail map you will be able to compare maps and fill in the inaccessible stretches and can attach the station names to the terrain as you go along.

Suggested reading material would be "Revisiting the Oregon Trail" by Gregory Franzwa which lists routes, etc. for the Oregon Trail. (This is a Guide Book) The Oregon Trail was in many cases the same as the Pony Express route, at least through Nebraska and Wyoming to the South Pass. Other books are, "Hoofbeats of Destiny" by Robert West Howard and "Saddles & Spurs" by Settle and Settle. All three of these books are in paperback form and are available from the Pony Express Stables and St. Joseph Museums for \$2.95, \$1.25 and \$1.75 respectively. Pony Express Trail maps are \$1.50.

Trail followers should be prepared. Especially if they are tempted to leave main traveled highways and roads.

The Pony Express Stables, at 914 Penn Street, St. Joseph, Missouri, was the starting place of the Pony Express. It has exhibits, maps, photographs, etc. that the trail traveler would find informational. The hours are 9-5 weekdays and 2-5 Sundays and holidays. The Pony Express crossed the Missouri River on a ferryboat. The general site of the old wharf area may be seen by taking Francis Street west to the river bank.

KANSAS

From St. Joseph by auto take Highway 36 west to Troy, Kansas. The trail followed a route to the right of the highway. At Troy take Kansas 20 to the southwest through Denton, Purcell, Everest and Horton. Just south of Horton is Kennekuk which was a Pony Express Station and is marked with a boulder. It was at one time a lively little town with several hotels, etc. Other stations that you would have passed between Troy and Horton (see Pony Express map) are not marked. The trail took a more direct route than your winding roads. From Kennekuk, the trail headed northwest where it crossed Highway 36 at Seneca. (You will have to use available back roads and dead head in a northwesterly direction until you reach Seneca) Only a stone marks the site in Seneca. The original Smith's Hotel building that was used by the Pony

Express was torn down in 1972. From this town the trail went west by northwest, circling in an arc above Highway 36 and back again to Highway 36 at Marysville. A point that might be of interest would be just north of Beattie, Kansas where pronounced wagon ruts of the old Overland Trail can be seen near the site of Guittard's Station. There is a monument on the public road west of the site (on private property). Inquire at Beattie. At Marysville, part of the old barn still exists and there is a small museum there. From Marysville to the Kansas-Nebraska border the trail meanders northwestward diagonally across section lines and available roads. You will leave the trail and continue west from Marysville on Highway 36 to the Hanover turn-off where you will turn north (right) to Hanover, Kansas just northeast of which is Cottonwood Pony Express Station, a museum maintained by the State of Kansas. If in the summer season, inquire here for local routing to the northwest across country roads.

NEBRASKA

The trail followed the Little Blue River to the northwest from Cottonwood. Steel City, Fairbury, Endicott, Hebron, Deweese, Spring Ranch and Hastings are some of the names of towns you may pass through on your wandering way to the Platte Valley. We would recommend the Hastings, Nebraska Museum as a point of local information and a place well worth seeing. Also of probable interest, but a bit out of the way to the west, is the Pioneer Village at Minden (pioneer items, Jackson paintings, etc.). Fort Kearney State Historical Park, Nebraska is another point of interest and a must for trail travelers. From here you will follow Highway 80 west through Nebraska nearly to Julesburg, Colorado, but keep in mind that the Pony Express Trail and Oregon Trail were on the south side of the Platte River while your Highway 80 is on the north. The Oregon, California and Pony Express Trails were all on the south side of the Platte River while the Mormon Trail was on the north side. Later the railroad chose the north side as did later highways. At Lexington, Nebraska a cabin may be seen in the city park that is described as the Plum Creek Pony Express Station cabin. At Gothenburg, some 25 miles further on, is another cabin in the city park which was a Pony Express Station cabin. Both have been moved in from the south side of the river. Just past Brady is Fort McPherson Cemetery of historical interest. At North Platte is the Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park. West from this city, the trail left the North Platte and followed the South Platte continuing along the South Platte to Julesburg, Colorado. (small museum and trail information) After Julesburg leave Highway 80. The trail veered to the northwest east of Ovid, Colorado and followed the Lodgepole Creek. You will follow 385 through the present day towns of Chappell and Lodgepole and on northwestward. Then North of Dalton, Nebraska follow Highway 385 to 92 and 26. See Court House and Jail House Rocks near Bridgeport and follow 92 on to Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff at Gering. All of these natural features were pioneer landmarks and often mentioned in trail diaries. Scotts Bluff National Monument near Gering is also on the "must" list of recommended stops. (museum, overland trail history, artifacts, paintings) From here west you will follow 26. As you travel, refer to your Pony Express Map for names of stations. We intentionally made no effort to direct you to exact station sites since many are not marked and/or nothing tangible exists and/or are on private property.

WYOMING

Crossing into Wyoming on Highway 26 be sure to visit the Fort Laramie National Historic site. At Guernsey see Guernsey State Museum and inquire about Register Cliffs, Warm Springs and other pioneer features nearby. Go on north and west on U.S. 25 to Glendo, Douglas (see Wyoming Pioneer Memorial Museum), and Casper. Old Fort Casper at west edge of the city would be of interest to Pony Express and Overland Trail buffs. From here the Pony Express trail parts proximity with paved highway and heads across country to Independence Rock in the Sweetwater Valley. Unless you are determined and use local instructions, it probably should not be attempted. Check with people at Old Fort Casper. Otherwise you will take Highway 220 to Independence Rock. This famous natural feature was often mentioned in old trail writings and is sometimes mentioned as the register of the desert. Many old names from trail days can be seen on its surface. Nine miles further on up the Sweetwater is Devil's Gate, another famous natural feature as is Split Rock further on. (See monuments to pioneers at the above three mentioned natural features. A Pony Express station was near each) Continuing on through Jeffrey City on Highway 287 you will cross west of Jeffrey City the Sweetwater River, along which the trails followed southwestward up the South Pass but that you cannot follow. You must follow 287 to its junction with 28 where you will double back to ascend the South Pass. At this junction point, however, it would be advisable to go on a side trip the 7 miles on north to Lander where they have a fine pioneer museum. (Freemont Pioneer County Museum) To continue your trail trip, follow 28 south from Lander. You will climb the South Pass which was the "backbone" of the continent to westward travelers then and now. Atlantic and South Pass Cities, although not touched by the Pony Express Trail, are both nearly ghost towns and would be of interest to you. South Pass City has been partially restored and a museum offers history interpretation. On the South Pass is the Whitman Monument and a roadside pull-out pointing out and describing historical and geographical features of the South Pass area. To the east of the highway and with the aid of binoculars you can see the Pacific Springs area marked by a few ancient buildings on the Hay Ranch. You will follow 28 on to Farson (monument) at which point the trail went on southwest along the Big Sandy River. You, however, should take 187 to Rock Springs where you will follow Highway 80 again westward. Of interest might be the old Granger Station (ruin and monument) that is on Highway 30 (from 80 west of Little America). At Granger you rejoin the Overland Trails that head on south past Church Buttes (historical plaque) and on to Fort Bridger. At town of Fort Bridger, be sure to see Fort Bridger Historic Monument. From here on southwestward the trail leaves main highways veering off to the left from 80 and it would be advisable again, unless you are determined and use local information, to follow 80 on west through Evanston and into the Echo Canyon. The trail would have paralleled you quite some distance south and rejoins you in Echo Canyon near Castle Rock.

UTAH

You will follow the canyon down to Echo at which point you will turn north 8 miles to Highway 65, at Henefer, turn left and follow 65 (pioneer trail) through the Wasatch Mountains to Salt Lake City. You will pass Bachman's Station and Mountain Dell Station sites (marked) and arrive at an overlook of Salt Lake, "This is the Place Monument." (museum here) Continue on to downtown Salt Lake City, Temple Square, Daughters of Utah Pioneer Museum and monument marking site of Pony Express Station in Salt Lake City. Continue south out of Salt Lake City, past the prison, find 73 west and go through Cedar Fort to Fairfield. (Stagecoach Inn restored) Pony Express station was nearby. Camp Floyd is to the south. Ask about trail roads through Faust and Simpson Springs (not a town but a spring) and on to Callao past several

station sites which are marked. This is all desert country, roads fair in dry weather. No services and no lodging. Inquire as you proceed as to road condition. From Callao the trail went over the Deer Creek Range to Ibapah. There is a road, but check on the condition of this road at the Bagley Ranch in Callao. Alternate route is north to Gold Hill and back to Ibapah. Deer Creek Ranch and Pony Express Station was at Ibapah.

NEVADA

From Ibapah continue south and west through the Goshute Indian Reservation on No. 2 ranch road past Prairie Gate Station site and on southwest past Antelope Springs site (not marked) to Shellbourne Ranch on the west side of the Shell Creek Range. At Shellbourne Ranch was the site of Shell Creek Station. It is now private property and there is no historical interpretation. Possibly not marked. At Shell Creek you can look west across Highway 93 and see Egan Canyon 10 miles to the west across the Steptoe Valley. Cherry Creek is a ghost mining town just north of Egan Canyon. From Egan Canyon in the Egan Range westward traveling is not advisable except with special vehicles, preparation and local information. The U.S. Bureau of Land Management has marked the Pony Express Trail route across public lands in Nevada in observance of the bicentennial, but a word of caution! It would be traversable only with off-the-road vehicles and then only in dry weather. If lacking the necessary experience, preparation and proper vehicle to take the cross-country trail, you should instead proceed south on 93 to Ely and then west on Highway 50 to again briefly join the trail (on right of highway) a few miles east of Austin. The trail then passed just to the north of Austin. Austin is a picturesque old mining town with interesting history. From here it is advisable to follow 50 on into Carson City which more or less parallels the trail to one side or the other. Because of the sandy desert terrain through which the trail followed, modern vehicles are apt to meet with trouble. To the east of Carson City see old Fort Churchill and Dayton. Both were on the Pony Express trail. Also see the old mining town of Virginia City to the north a few miles. In Carson City, the Nevada State Museum is of interest. (Pioneer trails, mining history, etc.) Leave south out of Carson City to Genoa. Genoa is the oldest settlement in Nevada. (Monument, Mormon Station Pony Express site) Continue south and over the Sierra Mountains over the Daggett grade to Stateline. Edgewood Pony Express Station was here.

CALIFORNIA

From Stateline to Sacramento follow Highway 50. See Placerville and Folsom (restored Pony Express Station) on the way to Sacramento. See Sutter's Fort in Sacramento and visit the restored historical district with B. F. Hastings Building at second and J Streets which was the western terminus of the Pony Express. The State Park Museum is located on the grounds of Sutter's Fort in Sacramento. From Sacramento the Pony Express mail was carried to San Francisco on the Sacramento River on the Steamboat Antelope. In San Francisco, see Wells Fargo Bank History Room, 420 Montgomery Street (western and Pony Express history).

PONY EXPRESS RIDERS?

Martin, Robert (Bob) Rider in my notes.. Not listed as to source. Overland Stage to California? Check.

INDIANS

Diarist John Green Berry, writing in 1864, mentions Indians near his camp somewhere between the Walkers and Carson rivers. Foot note: These Indians were probably of the same tribe as those who are now on the Walker River Indian Reservation, established in the 1870's at the north end of the lake. They are generally referred to as Paiutes, but as one authority has pointed out, this tribal name, applied commonly to most of the Shoshonean tribes in the Great Basin area, leads to great confusion. Some claim that the Walker River Indians are Paviotsoes and are more closely related to the Bannocks of the north than to the Paiutes, or Pah-Utes. Frederick Webb Hodges (ed.), Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico (2 vols.; Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin No. 30; Washington, 1912), II, 186--187, 212. Bancroft suggests that the Walker River Indians were a band of the Paiutes distinct from the principal group because they ate trout from the river and thus were called the Ocki (trout) Pah Utes. H. H. Bancroft, The Native Races (5 vols.; San Francisco, 1883), I, 466. (See Nevada Historical Society Quarterly Vol. XXIV, No. 1, Spring 1981, p. 75)

at that time was sent ship-board to Panama, transported across the isthmus, then placed aboard ship again to be delivered all up and down the west coast. This entire operation took some twenty two days.

During the great west-ward movement of the 1840's and fifties, St. Joseph depended upon three trans-continental routes for the delivery of mail to California. The great bulk of correspondence

KICKAPOO STATION

← WAS SOUTH AND A LITTLE EAST OF TYLER
POST OFFICE" (LOCAL RESIDENT) →